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**PICCOLO TEATRO DI MILANO, THE WORLD'S FOREMOST *COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE* COMPANY, BRINGS GOLDONI'S *ARLECCHINO*, *SERVANT OF TWO MASTERS* TO CAL PERFORMANCES, WEDNESDAY – SUNDAY, OCTOBER 26 – 30**

**REVERED ITALIAN ACTOR FERRUCCIO SOLERI STARS AS ARLECCHINO**

**PLUS**

**A WEEK-LONG FESTIVAL EXPLORES THE HISTORY OF *COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE* AND HUMOR FROM THE SIXTEENTH CENTURY THROUGH TODAY WITH DISCUSSIONS, *SIGHTLINES* TALKS AND A COSTUME EXHIBITION**

**BERKELEY, September 22, 2005** – Prepare to hear the gleeful guffaws of audiences young and old as Cal Performances presents six performances of **Piccolo Teatro di Milano's** production of the much-loved classic *Arlecchino, Servant of Two Masters* **Wednesday – Friday, October 26 – 28 at 8:00 p.m.; Saturday, October 29 at 2:00 p.m. & 8:00 p.m.; and Sunday, October 30 at 3:00 p.m.** in Zellerbach Playhouse. An array of artistic and educational events, including an exhibition of costumes, a conference on taboo humor, *Sightlines* talks and *SchoolTime* performances, among other events, will be part of the week-long festivities presented by Cal Performances in association with the Department of Theater, Dance and Performance Studies and the Consortium for the Arts at UC Berkeley.

Acclaimed Italian actor **Ferruccio Soleri**, widely regarded as the definitive *commedia dell'arte* actor, will star as *Arlecchino* in **Carlo Goldoni's** 1747 play, directed by Piccolo Teatro's late artistic director, **Giorgio Strehler**, and restaged by Soleri in collaboration with assistant director **Stefano de Luca**. The play itself may be centuries old, but the techniques it employs to create humor are timeless. "Anyone who has seen a Saturday morning television cartoon, an Abbott and Costello movie or a sex farce will recognize the comic techniques here," wrote *The New York Times*. "*Commedia dell'arte* simply mines humor from human folly by exaggerating behavior and manipulating language, and that recipe has never gone out of style." The play will be presented in Italian with English supertitles. At the 2:00 p.m. performance on

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Saturday, October 29, *Arlecchino* will be played by Enrico Bonavera, *Brighella* by Luca Criscuoli and the servant of the inn by Francesco Cordella.

An illustrated history of *commedia dell'arte* along with contemporary and antique costumes from Piccolo Teatro di Milano will be on display in the Zellerbach Playhouse lobby, curated by Professor **Mel Gordon** of UC Berkeley's Department of Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies.

A conference, ***Commedia in the Bay Area***, will be held on Saturday, October 22 from 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m. in Zellerbach Playhouse. This show and tell of contemporary and local *commedia dell'arte* will be moderated by Professor Gordon with the **Dell'Arte Players** and others, to be announced. This event is free and open to the public.

**Making Theater with Ferruccio Soleri of Piccolo Teatro di Milano**, a presentation by the great Italian actor, along with **Paolo Bosisio** of the Department of Theater History, University of Milan, will be held on Thursday, October 27 from 3:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m., in Zellerbach Playhouse. This event is free and open to the public.

A conference titled **Taboo and Humor: What's Funny and What's Forbidden** will turn a serious eye on humor and its place in popular culture on Friday, October 28 from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. in Zellerbach Playhouse. Professor Gordon will moderate a panel discussion with **Jim Valley**, writer for Emmy Award-winning *Arrested Development*; **Maggie Rowe**, director of *Hollywood Hellhouse*; **Jack Perez**, cult film director and writer of *Wild Things II*; and Professor **Paolo Bosisio** of the Department of Theater History, University of Milan. This conference is free and open to the public.

**Sightlines** pre-concert talks will take place one hour before each evening performance of *Arlecchino*, *Servant of Two Masters*. On Wednesday & Friday, October 26 & October 28, **Paolo Bosisio** of the Department of Theater History at the University of Milan will speak; and on

Thursday & Saturday, October 27 & October 29, the speaker will be Professor Gordon. The *Sightlines* talks are free to ticketholders.

Special *SchoolTime* performances by the costumed and masked stock characters from *Arlecchino*, *Servant of Two Masters* and the *commedia dell'arte* tradition will take place for Bay Area schoolchildren. Piccolo Teatro di Milano actors will perform stage antics, such as pratfalls and somersaults, and portions of the *Arlecchino* story narrated in English, Thursday & Friday, October 27 & October 28 at 11:00 a.m. Admission to *Schooltime* is priced at \$4.00 per student or adult chaperone; performances are pre-sold to school groups.

### **ACTOR FERRUCCIO SOLERI**

**Ferruccio Soleri** is widely regarded as the definitive *commedia dell'arte* actor on any stage in the past 50 years. He began his acting career in 1958, appearing in Pirandello's *La Favola del figlio cambiato* with the Piccolo Teatro di Milano. He first played Arlecchino with Piccolo Teatro in New York on the company's United States tour in 1960, and is one of only two actors to regularly inhabit the role. (The other was Marcello Moretti, whom Soleri understudied for several years.)

“As an actor, Mr. Soleri, now 75—well past the age of advanced acrobatics, you would think—must be an inspiration to his colleagues,” wrote the *New York Times*. “His nimble performance as a servant who sows confusion when he takes on two employers is a continual delight.”

“Harlequin has been my life,” Soleri says. “I have played him in eleven different productions, with care and affection, and I remember every single one in a different way.” His performances include the famous fortieth-anniversary production in 1977, billed (at the time) the *dell'Addio* or “Farewell” edition. “While we were rehearsing that *dell'Addio* production, [director Strehler] told me something that I will remember forever,” Soleri recalls. “‘Ferruccio,’ he told me, ‘I don’t understand. You get older, but your Harlequin becomes increasingly younger. How do you do it?’” A two-part apprenticeship was Soleri’s secret for keeping the role

fresh for decades: first, he studied how the great Moretti played Arlecchino; and second, he engaged in continuous acting lessons and discussions with Strehler.

Soleri has performed in plays by Lorca, Babel, Ibsen, Brecht, Shakespeare, Molière, Marivaux, Gogol, and others. He began directing in 1971 and has staged several dramas including Goldoni's *Mirandolina* and Machiavelli's *Mandragola*, and many operas including Rossini's *Barber of Seville* and Verdi's *La Traviata*. He teaches at the Piccolo Teatro's drama academy and has taught around the world, including at the Otto Falckenberg Schule in Munich and Santa Clara University in California. Soleri concludes his long, distinguished acting career with this tour.

### **DIRECTOR GIORGIO STREHLER**

Along with Paolo Grassi, **Giorgio Strehler** founded the Piccolo Teatro di Milano in 1947. He was born in Trieste in 1921 into an artistic family: his mother was a violinist, his grandfather a musician and theater manager, and his grandmother an actress. He attended the Filodrammatici Drama School in Milan prior to the Second World War. During the war, he joined the Resistance, lived in political exile in Switzerland, and staged plays in French. After the war he returned to Milan and founded the Piccolo Teatro. *Arlecchino, Servant of Two Masters* was the final play in the Piccolo Teatro's eclectic first season and has become one of the company's signature works.

In more than fifty years as artistic director of the Piccolo Teatro, Strehler – considered one of the greatest European stage directors – remade Italian theater into a political art form. He established cultural exchange programs with many other European theaters, and founded the Piccolo Teatro Drama School in 1986. He directed some 200 plays, including Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*, Shakespeare's *King Lear* and *The Tempest*, Pirandello's *Mountain Giants*, Goethe's *Faust*, Brecht's *Threepenny Opera* and *The Good Person of Szechuan*, and operas including Verdi's *Falstaff*, *Simon Boccanegra*, and *Macbeth*, and Mozart's *Don Giovanni*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *The Magic Flute*, and *Così fan tutte*. He also served as a member of the European Parliament and as Senator in the Italian Republic. “My life's work is to

tell stories to other people,” he once wrote. “I must tell them. It would be impossible for me not to... If there were no wooden stage, I’d tell stories on the ground, in a piazza, in a street, in some nook, on a balcony, from behind a window.” Strehler died in 1997.

### **PLAYWRIGHT CARLO GOLDONI**

One of Italy’s greatest playwrights, Carlo Goldoni was born in 1707 in Venice and wrote his first play at age eight. He wrote many drafts of *Servant of Two Masters* (the *Arlecchino* was added to the title years later by Strehler), and the play was first performed in 1747. Goldoni wrote 16 comedies in 1750 and 1751, and together they constitute his manifesto of theatrical ideas. The difficulties, paradoxes, and injustices of life are evident in all of his comedies. In 1783, after a few theatrical failures, he abandoned seventeenth-century neoclassical theatrical conventions and the *commedia dell'arte* and wrote *L'uomo di mondo*, a comedy of manners inspired by his affection for people he knew. In total, he wrote 120 plays.

### **PICCOLO TEATRO DI MILANO**

Known worldwide as an ambassador for Italian culture, Piccolo Teatro di Milano was founded as the first Italian public theater in 1947 by Giorgio Strehler and Paolo Grass. With the slogan “A Theater of Art for Everybody,” the theater has three venues in Italy in addition to its traveling stage, sometimes called its fourth stage. Over the last half century, the theater has traveled to more than 200 cities worldwide, resulting in 2,500 performances of *Arlecchino*, *Servant of Two Masters* and other *commedia dell'arte* works.

Since Strehler’s death, Piccolo Teatro, has been managed by **Sergio Escobar** and the celebrated stage director **Luca Ronconi**. In addition to *commedia dell'arte* and the works of Carlo Goldoni, the Piccolo Teatro presents great classical dramas, including works by Shakespeare, Chekhov, Brecht, Beckett, and Pirandello. In 1991 it was named a Theatre of Europe by the Union of European Theatres, an international organization that fosters cultural exchanges among theaters. Every year since 1999 it has organized an international theater festival in Milan, with theater companies coming from around the world to perform. Each year more than 600 performances take place in Piccolo Teatro di Milano’s three venues.

### **COMMEDIA DELL'ARTE AND ARLECCHINO, SERVANT OF TWO MASTERS**

*Commedia dell'arte* developed in Italy in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Built on the verbal and physical strengths of their actors, professional *commedia dell'arte* troupes traveled throughout Italy (and beyond), performing where audiences would gather. Performances were improvised based on a *canovaccio*—a general description of the plot and instructions regarding entrances and exits. Actors wore distinctive costumes and masks to identify stock characters, such as clumsy servants or their hapless superiors. First performed in 1747, *Servitore di due padroni* (*Servant of Two Masters*) illustrates the changes that the *commedia dell'arte* underwent in the middle of the eighteenth century. Playwright Goldoni's innovation was to emphasize the playwright's role over that of the actor. He created roles that were not simply masks but believable, three-dimensional characters.

### **TICKET INFORMATION**

Tickets to see the **Piccolo Teatro di Milano** perform *Arlecchino, Servant of Two Masters* on **Wednesday – Friday, October 26 – 28 at 8:00 p.m., Saturday, October 29 at 2:00 p.m. and 8:00 p.m., and Sunday, October 30 at 3:00 p.m.** in Zellerbach Playhouse are priced at **\$65.00**. Tickets are available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at [www.calperfs.berkeley.edu](http://www.calperfs.berkeley.edu); and at the door. Half-price tickets are available for purchase by UC Berkeley students. UC faculty and staff, senior citizens and other students receive a \$2 discount, and UC Alumni Association members receive a \$3 discount (Special Events excluded). For more information, call Cal Performances at (510) 642-9988, or visit the Cal Performances web site at [www.calperfs.berkeley.edu](http://www.calperfs.berkeley.edu).

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Cal Performances' 2005/2006 Centennial Season is sponsored by Wells Fargo.

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**CALENDAR EDITORS, PLEASE NOTE:**

**CALENDAR OF EVENTS**  
*Arlecchino, Servant of Two Masters*  
**OCTOBER 22 – 30**

**Sat., Oct. 22 from 3:00 – 6:00 p.m.**

**Zellerbach Playhouse, UC Berkeley Campus**  
Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave., Berkeley

*Conference*

**Commedia in the Bay Area,**

**Professor Mel Gordon,** moderator

**Dell'Arte Players**

And other panelists, to be announced

**Program:** A discussion of contemporary and local *commedia dell'arte* will be moderated by Professor Mel Gordon of UC Berkeley's Department of Theater, Dance, and Performance Studies with the **Dell'Arte Players** and others, to be announced.

**Tickets:** Admission is free; no tickets required.

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**Thurs., Oct. 27 from 3:30 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.**

**Zellerbach Playhouse, UC Berkeley Campus**  
Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave., Berkeley

*Lecture*

**Making Theater with Ferruccio Soleri of Piccolo Teatro di Milano**

**Ferruccio Soleri,** actor

**Paolo Bosisio,** historian

**Program:** Ferruccio Soleri, widely regarded as the definitive *commedia dell'arte* actor on any stage in the past 50 years, will talk about his experience performing *Arlecchino* for over four decades.

**Tickets:** Admission is free; no tickets required.

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**Fri., Oct. 28 from 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.**

**Zellerbach Playhouse, UC Berkeley Campus**  
Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave., Berkeley

*Panel Discussion*

**Taboo and Humor: What's Funny and What's Forbidden**

**Professor Mel Gordon,** moderator

**Jim Valley,** writer

**Maggie Rowe,** director

**Jack Perez,** director and writer

**Paolo Bosisio,** historian

**Program:** Professor Gordon will moderate a panel discussion including **Jim Valley**, writer for *Arrested Development*; **Maggie Rowe**, director of *Hollywood Hellhouse*; **Jack Perez**, cult film director and writer of *Wild Things II*; and **Paolo Bosisio** Department of Theater History, University of Milan.

**Tickets:** Admission is free; no tickets required.

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**Wed. – Sat., Oct. 26 – 29 at 7:00 p.m.**  
**SIGHTLINES**

**Zellerbach Playhouse, UC Berkeley Campus**  
Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave., Berkeley

Pre-performance discussion with Professor Paolo Bosisio of the Department of Theater History at the University of Milan (Oct. 26 & Oct. 28) or Professor Mel Gordon of the Theater, Dance & Performance Studies department at UC Berkeley (Oct. 27 & Oct. 29) take place at 7:00 p.m. *Sightlines* is a continuing program of pre- and post performance discussions with Cal Performances' guest artists and scholars, designed to enrich the audience's experience. These events are free to ticketholders.

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**Thurs. & Fri., Oct. 27 & 28 at 11:00 a.m.**  
**SCHOOLTIME PERFORMANCE**

**Zellerbach Playhouse, UC Berkeley Campus**  
Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave., Berkeley

**Piccolo Teatro di Milano**  
***Arlecchino, Servant of Two Masters***

**Program:** The costumed and masked stock characters will perform stage antics such as pratfalls and portions of the *Arlecchino* story narrated in English.

**Tickets:** \$4.00 per student or adult chaperone, available in advance only through Cal Performances. *SchoolTime* performances are open to students in grades 2 through 12 in Bay Area public and private schools. Supplemental study guides for the classroom are provided. For more information about the *SchoolTime* program, contact the *SchoolTime* coordinator at Cal Performances by email at [eduprograms@calperfs.berkeley.edu](mailto:eduprograms@calperfs.berkeley.edu), or by phone at (510) 642-1082.

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**Weds. – Fri., Oct. 26 – 28 at 8:00 p.m.**  
**Sat., Oct. 29 at 2:00 p.m. & 8:00 p.m.**  
**Sun., Oct. 30 at 3:00 p.m.**

**Zellerbach Playhouse, UC Berkeley Campus**  
Bancroft Way at Telegraph Ave., Berkeley

*Theater*

**Piccolo Teatro di Milano**  
***Arlecchino, Servant of Two Masters***  
**Ferruccio Soleri, actor**  
**Paolo Bosisio, historian**

**Program:** Piccolo Teatro di Milano's masterful production of the Goldoni classic *Arlecchino, Servant of Two Masters* starring Ferruccio Soleri, performed in Italian with English supertitles.

**Tickets:** \$65.00, available through the Cal Performances Ticket Office at Zellerbach Hall; at (510) 642-9988 to charge by phone; at [www.calperfs.berkeley.edu](http://www.calperfs.berkeley.edu); and at the door.

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